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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 05739 021256Z

44
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 OMB-01

AID-05 /058 W
---------- 084905
R 021230Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6937

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5739

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, AR
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VIDELA AND THE PRESS

1. ON AUG 31, PRESIDENT VIDELA TOOK OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY MORNING COURTESY CALL OF NEW OFFICERS OF CIRCULO DE LA PRENSA ARGENTINA (SIMILAR TO NATIONAL PRESS CLUB), AND ANNUAL DINNER SAME EVENING OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS, TO ASSURE PRESS OF GOA'S RESPECT FOR ITS ROLE AND GOA'S DESIRE TO COOPERATE.

2. ATTIRED IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES FOR LATTER OCCASION, GENERAL VIDELA AS GUEST OF HONOR GAVE SHORT ADDRESS TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS GATHERED AT AMERICAN CLUB. HE DID NOT ENTERTAIN QUESTIONS. HE SUGGESTED THAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN JOURNALISTS IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN THEIR SHARED ROLE AS SERVANTS IN BRINGING INFORMATION AND TRUTH TO MANKIND. AS ONE WHO GOVERNS, HE SAID HE APPRECIATED ROLE OF PRESS AS MEANS OF FORMING OPINION AND OF CREATING UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GOVERNORS AND GOVERNED.

3. AWARE OF THIS VITAL ROLE OF THE PRESS, VIDELA SAID, GOA OPENS WITHOUT RESERVATION TO DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PRESS ALL SOURCES OF INFORMATION. THUS GOA AFFIRMS ITS CONCEPTION OF DEMOCRACY IN WHICH MAN MAY DEVELOP WITH LIBERTY AND DIGNITY. HE WENT ON TO ADD: "IT IS JUST TO RECOGNIZE, HERE, PUBLICLY, THAT THE PRESS IN GENERAL HAS RISEN TO THE OCCASION IN USING THIS ACCESS TO SOURCES OF INFORMATION WITH RESPON-
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 05739 021256Z

SIBILITY AND OBJECTIVITY."

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

4. COMMENT: VIDELA SAID RIGHT THINGS TO CORRESPONDENTS, AND SAID THEM WELL, AND IT WAS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT HE SEEMED TO FEEL THAT GOA HAS BEEN TREATED FAIRLY BY PRESS. HOWEVER, HE MUST HAVE HAD TONGUE IN CHEEK WHEN HE CLAIMED GOA OPENNESS AND RESPECT FOR PRESS; NO CORRESPONDENT WAS IMPOLITE ENOUGH TO POINT OUT TO THEIR GUEST THAT GOA IS FAR FROM OPEN GOVERNMENT, AND THAT IT PRACTICES EFFECTIVE CENSORSHIP IN MANY AREAS, BUT MANY MADE SUCH COMMENTS IN PRIVATE AFTER VIDELA'S SPEECH. ON BALANCE, SPEECH MAY HAVE BEEN USEFUL AT LEAST AS REMINDER TO LOWER ECHELONS OF GOA THAT PRESS MUST BE HANDLED WITH SOME CARE AND THAT ON WHOLE IT HAS INDEED SO FAR BEEN RATHER KIND TO NEW REGIME.
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Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
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